

Delay the media vote

I tried calling Chairperson Powell to ask for a delay in the June 2nd vote and got a voice mail saying to file another comment (and a full mailbox).

The vote should be delayed and the proposal made public so we can comment on the actual rules.

On NPR, Powell said Clear Channel was an aberration. But how do you know what disastrous aberrations will be caused by the new rules if the public can't put them up to scrutiny?

And he said this would help local content. He is so wrong.

Already in the quest for profits (and with relaxed FCC oversight), local public affairs programs and childrens programs have almost vanished. Even more journalists will be laid off (I am an unemployed journalist).

In cities with duopolies, they run the same news on both stations.

Sinclair is already gutting local news and feeding all of them from their conservative Baltimore NewsCentral. Sinclair owns over 60 stations reaching 24% of the country. With the relaxing of the cap and duopoly rule, their bad news.

Gary Owens of the Pittsburgh Post-Gazette wrote on May 29th

<http://www.post-gazette.com/tv/20030529wpghtv5.asp>

WPGH news morphs into local-national hybrid
Thursday, May 29, 2003

By Rob Owen, Post-Gazette TV Editor

The news crawl across the bottom of the screen that showed up on KDKA earlier this year now infects WPGH's news as well, one of the many changes on the Sinclair-owned station's 10 p.m. news last night.

A new format combines segments of local news with national and international news and weather from News Central, Sinclair's centralized news operation in Hunt Valley, Md.

Using a single anchor for Pittsburgh segments, News Central puts Sheila Hyland behind a desk on a new set with a blue background that complements the surroundings. The first segment included local news and a weather preview.

The newscast's second segment, which ran longer than the first, took viewers to News Central in Baltimore. Morris Jones anchors News Central segments, which are produced by Sinclair and not Fox News Channel. But they may appeal to some Fox fans as News Central abandoned journalistic objectivity for a conservative slant last night. A report on President Bush's tax cut gave mere lip service to those opposing it and was followed by an interview with a tax cut proponent.

"Joining us from Washington to talk about your money," Jones said by way of introduction, pointing a finger at viewers for emphasis. At the end of

the interview, Jones injected his opinion, giving the tax cut and its intended results a thumbs up.

"Sounds good," he said.

Jones welcomed Pittsburgh viewers to News Central and in an odd bit of strange bedfellows, took credit for sales of "The Death of Right and Wrong: Exposing the Left's Assault on Our Culture and Values," by author Tammy Bruce, "a self-described conservative, gun-toting lesbian." Jones said Bruce's book is the best-selling political book at Barnes & Noble.

"Bruce complained that no major TV news organization except News Central would interview her," he said, managing to keep a straight face while proclaiming News Central a major news organization. "Apparently our viewers responded."

In local segments, WPGH's graphics are now cleaner and look better, but there are too many of them. When the news began, the ticker ran horizontally across the bottom of the screen, a bar ran vertically along the left side, an animated globe rotated in a graphic above the news crawl and a rectangular Fox 53 logo in the lower left morphed into a News Central logo and back again.

This evolution of WPGH's newscast is a sad case. Channel 53 offered a dependable, welcome local news alternative in recent years. It avoided the flash and trash style of many Fox stations in other parts of the country, opting instead for a straight, no-nonsense approach. Local segments retain that integrity, but News Central is another story.

Thank you,

Steve Rhodes